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The Shamli uprising

Unsung Indian
freedom
fighters

THE SHAMLI UPRISING (1857)

**UNSUNG INDIAN FREEDOM
FIGHTERS**

Written by Muhammad Talha Amin

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INTRODUCTION

On 10th of May, 1857, the would-be founders of Darul uloom Deoband, namely Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, led by their righteous teacher Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki rebelled against the British East India Company on the ground of Thana Bhawan, a small town in the Shamli district. The outcome of the rebellion was a decisive victory for the group of muslim ulemas. But later on, the rebellion came in favour of the British East India Company. From that point, an Islamic revivalist movement came into existence, popularly known as ‘the Deobandi movement’.



Thana Bhawan (left), Thana Bhawan on the map of Shamli district (right)



Shamli district on the map of Uttar Pradesh

CHAPTER 1 : TEACHERS AND DISCIPLES

Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki was born in the year 1817 (*according to some sources, 1814*) at Nanauta, North Western Provinces, British Raj. He was named Imdad Hussain by his father Muhammad Amin and later came to be known as ‘Imdadullah’ by his teacher, Shah Muhammad Ishaq (Ishaq Muhajir Makki).

Imdadullah’s mother passed away when he was only seven years old, therefore, Imdadullah’s education was ignored. He tried to memorize the Qu’ran on his own, but failed to do so. By the age of sixteen, Imdadullah, along with Mamluk Ali Nanotvi (1789-1851), travelled to Delhi to seek education. By the age of eighteen, he became a student of Nasruddin Naqshbandi. Later, he studied under Noor Muhammad Jhanjhavi.

After the unfortunate death of Noor Muhammad Jhanjhavi, Imdadullah became quiet upset and reduced his communication with the people. Nearly after six months of less socialization, Imdadullah decided to visit Medina. Reportedly, on 7th of October 1845,

Imdadullah arrived at Banaras to start his journey towards medina. From Banaras, he arrived at Mecca, Ottoman Arabia and performed Hajj. After that, he visited the tomb of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Imdadullah than stayed in Medina for a few more years, studying under Ishaq Muhajir Makki.

Imdadullah than was asked by his teacher to return to his homeland. Imdadullah did as he was asked and came back to his homeland in Thana Bhawan, British Raj by the year 1847. He became popular because of his knowledge. Many local muslims of Thana Bhawan came to learn from him. Haji Imdadullah kept rejected everyone's offer for joining him as a student.

One night, Haji Imdadullah's sister-in-law saw Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) in her dream. She heard the prophet saying “ Get aside! I shall prepare the food of Imdadullah's guests who are ulema.”

When this dream was informed to Haji Imdadullah, he finally decided to accept students, and the first student whom he accepted was Moulana **Rashid Ahmad Gangohi**.

Mamluk Ali Nanotvi (*the head teacher of Arabic language at the Zakir Husain Delhi college*) sent his son **Muhammad Yaqub Nanotvi** (*born in the year 1833 at Nanauta, British Raj*) to study under Imdadullah Muhajir Makki as soon as he learnt that Imdadullah has started accepting students.

Rashid Ahmad Gangohi or Rashid Ahmad Bin Hidayat Ahmad Ayyubi Ansari Gangohi (*born in the year 1826 at Gangoh, Ceded and Conquered Provinces, British Raj*) was one of the most important and brilliant disciple among the disciples of Imdadullah. Gangohi was also a student of Mamluk Ali Nanotvi and used to study books of ahadiths under Shah Abdul Ghani Mujaddidi.

Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi (*born in the year 1832 at Nanauta, Mughal empire*) was another notable student of Imdadullah Muhajir Makki. He also used to study under the same teachers that Rashid Ahmad Gangohi used to learn from.

Najib Ali Choudhary (*born at Bagbari, Karimganj, Sylhet district*) was a student of Imdadullah, he travelled from his hometown, Karimganj to Thana Bhawan to learn from Imdadullah.

Reportedly there were other students of Imdadullah Muhajir Makki at that time other than these students whom we don't know about. These four students are regarded as the key students of Imdadullah because of their leading role in the battle of Shamli. Most of Imdadullah's students were residents of Thana Bhawan.

Hafiz Muhammad Zamin (*born in the year 1809, at Muzaffarnagar, British Raj*) was a friend of Imdadullah Muhajir Makki. He came to stay in Thana Bhawan after his completion of hifz-e-Qu'ran.

CHAPTER 2 : ERA OF THE REVOLT

In that era of British rule over modern day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, muslims were being tortured or suppressed. Britishers would frequently kill muslim ulemas, would burn Qu'rans in public, mosques were shut down and religious congregations were not permitted. These events of oppression led to the growth of an anti-British ideology among the muslims living in British Raj.

Following the events on the afternoon of 29 March 1857, where Mangal Pandey of the 34th Bengal Native Regiment exploited a mutiny against his senior commanding officers. Pandey was soon captured by British officials. On 8th of April 1857, Mangal Pandey was hanged to death at Barrackpore, Bengal, under the charges of mutiny against the company.

His hanging provoked more anger among the citizens of British India and Pandey's acts of bravery influenced people of India to finally overthrow the British East India Company from the land of 'hindustan'.

At Thana Bhawan, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki was being informed of every act of oppression ventured by the company. Imdadullah was frustrated and he declared ‘Jihad’ (*Islamic holy war*) against the British East India Company. Imdadullah soon gained support of his students and other local ulamas for his idea of jihad against oppression. Eventually, Haji Imdadullah gained support from the non muslim locals of Thana Bhawan.

Although some scholars thought that it isn’t legitimate to fight the Britishers in a private way while Mughal empire is still partially active. Some other scholars believed that it is indirect suicide to fight against the Britishers with such a low strength and having no arms or equipment to use. By the beginning of May, 1857, scholars from Deoband, Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar gathered at Jama masjid, Delhi. There, they announced for Jihad against the British East India Company.

Maulana Sheikh Muhammad shared his opinion on this Jihad mission. He said that the current situation of the muslims is not good, and exploiting jihad at this

time is not obligatory nor is it a duty for the muslims to fight the british.

In an account of Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi meeting Maulana Sheikh Muhammad, Nanotvi politely asked him that why doesn't Sheikh support this movement against the enemies of our religion and country. In response Sheikh Muhammad replied that currently there are no weapons with the people to fight against the heavily equipped britishers. Nanotvi than politely argued with Sheikh that currently muslims have sticks, knifes and old broken guns... which is more weapons than what the muslims had during the battle of Badr (624 AD). Sheikh was silenced by Qasim Nanotvi's argument, Sheikh Muhammad than nodded to support the campaign. Hafiz Muhammad Zamin than declared for the preparation on Jihad.

NOTE : there is a special connection between battle of Badr and battle of Shamli. Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki was the descendent of the companion of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), Umar Ibn al Khattab (R.A). A fierce and leading warrior of the muslim army at the Battle of Badr. While, Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi and Muhammad Yaqub Nanotvi belonged from the siddique family of Nanauta, meaning, he was a descendant of the companion Abu Bakr siddique (R.A). Abu Bakr (R.A) was the tent guard of prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) during the battle of Badr.

On the other hand, there is Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. He was the descendant of the companion named Abu Ayyub al Ansari (R.A). Abu Ayyub al Ansari (R.A) was a participant in battle of Badr, most probably as the standard bearer for the muslim army (or maybe, he was occupied in fighting Meccan polytheists).

2.1 BATTLE OF THANA BHAWAN

Finally came the day for the Jihad movement to commence. Led by Imdadullah Muhajir Makki on 10th of May, 1857. With his students, local muslims and non muslims, together participated in the campaign, which soon took a violent turn. Forces of Imdadullah gained advantage against the armed company forces and gained victory over them. All British officials were expelled from Thana Bhawan by Imdadullah.

There were nearly a thousand mujahideen, among them we find names like **Kura Singh**, a sikh resident of Thana Bhawan who was part of Imdadullah's forces. There were others like local merchants and peasants who supported the campaign of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki.

2.2 AFTERMATH

Upon their victory over Thana Bhawan, Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi was appointed as the chief in command

by Haji Imdadullah. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was appointed as the ‘Qazi’ (judge who operates as per sharia law) of the newly formed Islamic territory. All residents of Thana Bhawan, despite being a muslim or non muslim gave allegiance to their newly formed government. All of British equipments used by British officials of Thana Bhawan were seized.

While the people celebrate their victory over the British forces and gaining freedom from the company, news arrive at Thana Bhawan that a large platoon of Britishers with cannons are passing by Thana Bhawan at night. Everyone was saddened by this news, as they knew that they cannot stand against cannons with just swords and few rifles.

Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was very intellectual and polite, he suggested Imdadullah, that the British platoon were guaranteed to pass by a Garden in Thana Bhawan, if the mujahideen attack them from the garden than the British forces would be confused. Because attacking from the garden at night time will lead the britishers into retreat as they can't spot the fighters.

Imdadullah was impressed by Gangohi's idea and took thirty or fourty men along with him into the garden equipped with rifles (*which they seized from the Britishers*). At night, British forces arrived at Thana Bhawan, and Imdadullah along with his mujahideen were hiding in the garden to ambush the British forces. As soon as the British forces arrived in front of the garden, Imdadullah's forces fired at the platoon all at the same time. This frightened the Britishers because they have no idea how many men are they dealing with. British forces fled away leaving behind a cannon with its artillery .

Rashid Ahmad Gangohi pulled the cannon into Thana Bhawan and placed it in front of a mosque, as the people of Thana Bhawan celebrate another victory over the Britishers.

The next few months, people of Thana Bhawan were taught martial arts skills in order to be prepared to fight the Britishers again as they were sure that the British forces might return someday again or maybe some other oppressor will take control over Thana Bhawan. Peace was restored at Thana Bhawan and no one had to live under oppression. The courageous acts of

Indians that were accomplished in Meerut and Shamli had influenced others to participate in the rebellion against the British East India Company.

2.3 IMPACT

Many other Indians soon joined the armed struggle for freedom. Independence didn't remain like a dream for Indians. Mughal empire under Bahadur Shah Zafar, Jhansi state under Lakshmibai Newalkar, Awadh state under Begum Hazrat Mahal, Maratha empire under Nana Saheb Peshwa II, Jagdishpur state under Kunwar Singh, Gwailor factions, Jodhpur factions etc. joined the struggle for the independence of India. Each coming day would showcase a new victory of the Indians in such and such place over the company forces. Battles like battle of Chinhet, Battle of Cawnpore took place with rebels defeating company forces. Such news of victory used to reach Thana Bhawan and people would express happiness and joy for it, independence seemed near for India.

As others were fighting against the company forces, Haji Imdadullah was planning for another attack on the British forces at Tehsil along with his mujahideen. And this time Haji Imdadullah had more weapons than

what his army had previously owned in their Thana Bhawan campaign.

2.4 BATTLE OF TEHSIL

There was a strong military power of British East India Company in Tehsil, Haji Imdadullah felt that forces of British can easily attack Thana Bhawan from Tehsil. Therefore, Haji Imdadullah decided that Tehsil should be captured for no further threat from the Englishmen.

By the midst of September, 1857, Forces of Imdadullah burst into Tehsil. British forces couldn't resist this attack and had to retreat from Tehsil. Another victory for Haji Imdadullah and his mujahideen. But this time, there was no joy among the muslims over their victory. Hafiz Muhammad Zamin acquired martyrdom during the battle from a bullet wound.

After the battle ended, the first news that the mujahideen get is that the Mughals have been defeated and Bahadur Shah Zafar has been arrested by the Britishers. Delhi had fallen into the hands of the British East India company. The news had demotivated the forces of Imdadullah, they were already saddened

by the death of their major commanding officer, Hafiz Muhammad Zamin.

Bahadur Shah Zafar was announced king of Hindustan by the sepoy mutineers at Delhi Mughal court on 12th of May 1857, because of Bahadur Shah Zafar's neutral views on religions. Many other Indian kings and regiments had accepted and declared him as the new emperor of India. But now, after his arrest, Indians have lost their leader. The mujahideen lost hope, so did many other rebel groups.

From this point of the war, the tables had turned! Britishers soon gained upper hand against the rebels. They defeated all the active forces of other rebel groups. The rebellion was eventually suppressed by the company.

In Thana Bhawan, whites had to hide from the mujahideen, or else they would been arrested by the mujahideen. Things were about to change soon.

2.5 SIEGE OF SHAMLI

By the month of October, 1857, British forces under the command of Major Sawyer proceeded to invade Meerut and Shamli. The news soon arrived at Thana

Bhawan, that a British attack is expected by night. Haji Imdadullah and his forces prepared for another war. Thana Bhawan was fortified by a wall and the only way to pass the wall was a gate. The gate was closed and at a high point, they placed the cannon which they had seized from the British forces in the beginning of the rebellion.

As expected, the British forces arrived at the gates of Thana Bhawan with cannons and riflemen. The force had already destroyed multiple villages enroute from Meerut till they reached Shamli. The Britishers accused the villagers of aiding the rebels by providing shelter. Reportedly they burnt down villages and plundered the houses of the residents due to this accusation.

It was night time, and Britishers were finding a way to get into Thana Bhawan. At that point of time, Haji Imdadullah used their only cannon for the first time. The very first shot hit it's target and destroyed one of the British cannons. In rage, Major Sawyer responded with a larger artillery attack. The mujahideen owned only a single cannon, while the Britishers had many. The competition between both sides was unequal and it

lasted for only two hours. The artillery attack resulted in the breaking of the walls of Thana Bhawan and eventually, the gate was blown away. British forces stormed inside Thana Bhawan at dawn.

The Britishers burnt down many houses and plundered Thana Bhawan. Haji Imdadullah did try to resist the attacks of the Britishers with his army of riflemen, but decided to retreat, as the British burnt down and blew up several villages enroute from Meerut to Thana Bhawan which housed the families of the revolutionaries. Already, some horrific incidents were contrived by the British forces like burning alive Ashguri Begum (*mother of famous freedom activist, Inayat Ali Khan*). Haji Imdadullah had understood that the massacre, the Englishmen are doing is to intimidate the rebels (*the massacre and plunder was a notorious tactic of the Britishers to discourage Imdadullah and his mujahideen*).

All of the mujahideen who kept fighting were martyred in Thana Bhawan. Eventually, Shamli fell into the hands of the Britishers once again. And the mujahideen had disbanded itself.

CHAPTER 3 : REBELLION SUPPRESSED

Bahadur Shah Zafar was arrested by Major William Hodson on 20th September 1857, Hodson then shot Bahadur's children (*i.e Mirza Mughal and Mirza Khizr Sultan*). The spirit of fighting the Britishers was lost at this point for many Indians.

By April of 1858, Bahadur Shah Zafar was trialed at Red Fort and was charged of four crimes (*i.e aiding and abetting the mutinies of the troops, encouraging and assisting divers persons in waging war against the British government, assuming the sovereignty of Hindustan, causing and being accessory to the murder of the Christians*). On 7th of October, 1858, at 4 am, Bahadur Shah Zafar along with his wives and two of the remaining sons were sent to Rangoon prison at Burma.

NOTE : At the beginning of the trial, Bahadur Shah Zafar was not proved guilty, but later, Hafiz Ahsanullah Khan (who was Zafar's most trusted prime minister and personal physician) betrayed him. Ahsanullah Khan provided all the evidences against Zafar in exchange of his own amnesty from the British.

By June of 1858, the rebellion almost came to an end. On 17th of June, 1858, Captain Clement Walker Heneage led an army against Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi. Her army was slaughtered in this battle (estimated 5000 soldiers of Lakshmibai's army were killed) and eventually Rani Lakshmibai was wounded. Before she died, she asked a hermit to burn her body and the hermit did as he was commanded. Lakshmibai was cremated on 18th of June, 1858.

On 8th of July 1858, Charles Canning (the governor-general of India) declared peace in the country. By 2nd of August, 1858, Britishers passed 'Government of India Act 1858'. Its provisions was called for the dissolution of the British East India Company and transfer of its functions to the British crown for the further suppression of the rebellion. On 1st of November 1858, the Government of India Act 1858 was implied and Queen Victoria (*queen of the United Kingdom*) granted amnesty to all the rebels that were not involved in any kind of murder of British officials.

While on the other hand, many rebels were executed in a brutal way known as 'the blow from a cannon'. The victims were tied to the mouth of a cannon which was

to be fired immediately after. The head of the person that is being executed would blow away into pieces when the cannon was fired.



Vasily Vereshchagin (*a famous Russian war artist*) is known for his realism, painted ‘suppression of the Indian Revolt’ in 1884 after he visited India. The painting showcases Indian mutineers being tied to a cannon, prepared to be executed by blowing their head into pieces. And this type of execution was termed as “blow from a gun” or “blow from a cannon”.

NOTE : The painting soon disappeared after its initial sale in New York and its present location is not known to us. It is unknown if

the painting even survived or not. According to some sources, the British government bought the painting and destroyed it by shooting it with a cannon in order to prevent the negative publicity associated with the painting (i.e brutal atrocities committed by the Britishers against the Indians living in British Raj).

The hostilities of the British officially ended on 8th of July, 1859. This day is considered as the official ending of the first war for independence of India with nearly 800,000 Indians getting killed.

NOTE : The name of this rebellion is known by many different names i.e sepoy mutiny, indian mutiny, the great rebellion, the revolt 1857, the indian insurrection or the first war of independence. As for the battle fought by our elders, it is known as Ghazwa-e-shamli, battle of Thana Bhawan or Battle of Shamli. This series of armed conflicts fought by our elders and the people of Thana Bhawan is termed as the first wave of 'Deobandi Jihad'.

CHAPTER 4 : DENOUEMENT

British forces had arrested some people at Thana Bhawan. Due to their ‘cowardiness’, they falsely testified with wrong information and portrayed themselves as the well wishers of the British East India Company, in order to save themselves. They accused Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi to be the ringleaders of the rebellion and that they gathered hay from the villagers and burned down the revenue office. They also accused these three pious elders of looting the government treasury from the revenue office. But in reality, these three elders lived in poverty and lived through hardship.

Upon hearing the testimony of the accusers, British government issued an arrest warrant against Haji Imdadullah, Rashid Ahmad and Qasim Nanotvi. Britishers promised a huge reward for those who will give information of these three, resulting in their arrest. Many people were interested in earning the reward, therefore, they started searching for the trio along with the Britishers.

Upon hearing this news, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki, Moulana Rashid and Qasim Nanotvi went into hiding. Haji Imdadullah stayed in hiding at Ambala, Tigri, Panjasala and other villages. He later decided to bid farewell to his two beloved students (i.e Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi). Haji Imdadullah had decided to migrate to Mecca until things settle down, and come up with a new plan to fight the British. On his journey back to Mecca, he visited many graves of auliyas at Sindh. Haji Imdadullah was accompanied by Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Qasim Nanotvi till they reached Karachi. Haji Imdadullah embarked on a ship from Karachi and sailed along, finally reaching Mecca. It is reported that Najib Ali Choudhary also sailed to Mecca along with Haji Imdadullah. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi returned to Gangoh and Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi returned to Deoband after they bid farewell to their teacher.

Moulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi hid at Deoband until he was pardoned by the British as per Queen Victoria's declaration of amnesty to all the rebels who didn't commit any murder. Qasim Nanotvi came out of hiding and permanently settled at Deoband. During

this tensed period, one day, Qasim Nanotvi saw the police arriving (*they were looking for Qasim Nanotvi*). Coincidentally, an officer approach Qasim Nanotvi and asked him “where is maulwi Muhammad Qasim?”. Qasim Nanotvi didn’t wish to lie (*although, at this situation, it was permissible for him to lie*) used his wit and took a step back. He than pointed at the place he was standing before and replied “ He was here just now!” After saying so, Qasim Nanotvi started walking forward, while the police were looking for him around the village after hearing that Muhammad Qasim was there. The police failed to capture Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi.

Due to the rumours and false accusations, the British forces were constantly trying to find three of these elders. The trio was labelled as insurgents, troublemakers, criminals and state-enemies. Although the British couldn’t afflict them by any means.

When Rashid Ahmad Gangohi came back to Gangoh. At his arrival, he came to know that thousands of lies were being spread about him, there were campaigns based on lies against him. The time was very awfully disturbing. Each coming day would be filled with

announcements of such and such person being hanged or brutally executed. Womens feared of becoming a widow, while the children feared to become an orphan. Gangohi knew that his name was on the list of suspected criminals and the British will come looking for him one day or the another, But he had full faith in Allah. That Allah wouldn't allow false accusers to achieve their goal and only truth shall win (*Gangohi is characterized to hold very strong mentality*).

As expected by Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, he was arrested by the Britishers in 1859. Six months prior to his arrest, he was put on trial. It was a severe test for Moulana Rashid, strict inquiries and investigation were done, the British declared that Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was innocent of all the crimes that he was accused of. The British officials concluded that the testimonies of the accusers were a total lie and absolute slander. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was freed of all the charges and he was escorted back to Gangoh - safe and sound.

Years passed, one night... Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi dreamed that he was standing on the roof of the Ka'bah, rivers are flowing from all of his fingers of

hands and toes, they are spreading towards different parts of the world. He interpreted the dream this way that he should start an Islamic seminary.

Came the big day on 30th of May, 1866, when Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi, along with Fazlur Rahman Usmani, Sayyid Muhammad Abid, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Nehal Ahmad, Zulfiqar Ali Deobandi and Mehtab Ali established the famous Islamic seminary '**Darul Uloom Deoband**' at present day Deoband, a town of Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh.

Today, Darul Uloom Deoband is the world's largest 'Madrasa' (*Islamic Seminary*). It is marked as the centre of the sunni , hanafi based Islamic movement known as the **Deobandi movement**, which is specifically focused around the revival of the true form of Islam. Today, there are over 400 million adherents of this Islamic movement. The seminary also holds strict adherence to Islam without the involvement of any kind of non-muslim culture. They openly oppose 'shirk' (*polytheism*) and 'bidaah' (*innovation*) within Islam or any kind of Islamic practices.

By 1868, a mosque was established in the seminary. His greatest achievement is marked as the revival of a

proper education system for the muslims. Under his supervision, many Islamic seminaries were set up at Thana Bhawan, Galautti, Kerana, Danapur, Meerut and Muradabad. These seminaries were funded by the muslim states and the rich individuals of the muslim community of India.

At Mecca, Najib Ali Choudhary dreamt of the Prophet (P.B.U.H). Najib was guided by the Prophet to build an Islamic seminary at his hometown. He sailed back to India and reached his hometown at Bagbari, Karimganj, Sylhet district. On 1st of February 1873, Najib Ali choudhary started his own Islamic seminary at his own home. He named it '**Madinatul Uloom Bagbari**'.

Madinatul Uloom Bagbari Najibia Alia Madrasa (*also known as Darul Uloom Bagbari*) is marked as the oldest Islamic institution in the south Assam region and considered as the first true Madrasa in the greater-Sylhet region. Najib's Islamic seminary is officially the first Islamic seminary in the Barak Valley region.

On 8th of May, 1876, a "fair for God-consciousness" was organised at Chandapur village, near Shahjahanpur. It was sponsored by the local zamindars

namely Piyare Lal Kabir Panthi and Padre Knowles with the support of the collector of Shahjahanpur, Robert George. Christians, Hindus and Muslims were invited to prove the truthfulness of their respective religions. Muhammad Munir Nanotvi and Ilahi Bakhsh Rangin Barelvī suggested Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi to participate in this fair. Qasim Nanotvi agreed to it and went to the fair along with few of his colleagues.

Padre Knowles explained the trinity to the people saying there are three attributes in a line – length, breadth and depth, thus, trinity is proven in every way. When Qasim nanotvi was given the chance for a speech, he refuted the concept of trinity and lectured about the merits of Islam. He spoke in support of the idea of one god which has no son and he is ‘lasharik’ (*incomparable*). Christians couldn’t reply to any of the points that were pointed out by Qasim Nanotvi and won.

By 1879, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki returned to India and this time he was joined by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (*popularly regarded as ‘hakimul ummah’ and ‘mujaddidul millat’*).

On 15th of April, 1879, after the Zuhra prayers were commenced, Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi sadly passed away at the age of 47. The place where Qasim Nanotvi was buried, came to be known as **Mazar-e-Qasmi** or Qabristan-e-Qasmi. After his demise, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was made the ‘sarparast’ (patron) of Darul Uloom Deoband. Gangohi was eventually made the patron of Mazahir Uloom Saharanpur as well.

Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki had returned back to Mecca once again. He lived his final years there until his unfortunate demise on 19th of October, 1899 at the time of Fajr ‘adhaan’ (Islamic prayer call). He was buried in Jannat al-Mu’alla in Mecca.

By the beginning of 1905, it is reported that there was a certain change in the behaviour of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. Sometimes he wouldn’t recognise his associates. It was clear for many, that time has come for the third elder of the Deobandi movement, to say goodbye to this life. Gangohi was already disturbed mentally because of the sudden demise of his dear teacher, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki. One of his associates then had a dream where he saw Haji Imdadullah arriving at Deoband. Haji Imdadullah

informed the associate that “I have already died, I have come to take Maulwi Rashid Ahinad Sahib. I will take him away by the 20th of Dhu al-Hijjah.” The associate had informed this dream to Gangohi. He would interpret the dream in order to relax his associates and to prevent them from thinking that he was about to die. He would say in joy that “If Hazrat (*i.e Imdadullah*) is going to come to take me, then I have hope that I will be taken in a good way.”

One day, while Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was about to go to pray Fajr Salah at the mosque, one of his ‘Khadim’ (*attendant*) saw red blood stains on his cloths. He informed Gangohi about it and Gangohi changed his cloths quickly. Than he proceeded to go to mosque and pray fajr.

His khadim suspected that the previous night, when Gangohi was praying nafil salah in his room, a poisonous insect or reptile (*i.e a scorpion or snake*) had bit him, and due to his concentration in salah, he might have not felt anything.

When Gangohi returned home and removed his shoes in order to lay down on his bed, his khadim noticed dried blood on his feet. The khadim was concerned and

he immediately went to check on the ‘musalla’ (*prayer mat*) of Gangohi. He found soaked blood stains on the musalla aswell.

A series of tension arised in Gangohi’s house, everyone thought that his vein was bursted due to the poisonous creature’s biting. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi responded that he didn’t feel anything that when did a creature attack him. He expressed no pain or discomfort.

Due to the emmense loss of blood, Gangohi started feeling immense weakness from the very next day, although he didn’t care to take medications. He would sleep all day and would eventually wake up few moments before adhaan. As soon as he would wake up, he would ask “Has the adhaan been called? How much time is there before the salah?”.

On 31st of July 1905, after praying Isha, Gangohi laid on his bed, his body temperature rose drastically. The next day, his fever turned intense. Everyone thought that this was normal fever, and was treated with normal medication. Gangohi’s son was concerned regarding his treatment. Coincidentally, Dr. Muhammad Ismail arrived from Bombay and started

treating Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. The spot in which Gangohi was bit had turned green, so the doctor had confirmed that he was bitten by a snake. Some had suspected that the enemies of Maulana Rashid had performed witchcraft against him. On Saturday, 4th of August, 1905, Gangohi asked his khadims if it was Friday. They replied that is was Saturday.

Sulayman Miya from Surat had a dream on 11 august, 1905. In his dream he saw the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) sitting on a throne and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi sitting beside him.

On the same day (*Friday, 11th of August, 1905*), Gangohi repeated his question to the khadims that whether it was Friday or not. His khadims replied that indeed it was Friday. After hearing the reply, Gangohi recited “inna lillahi wa inna elaihi rajiwun” (*to Allah we belong and to him, we will return*). On the same day, at the age of 83, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi passed away soon after the adhaan for the Friday prayer was called out at 12:30 pm.

People who adhere to the deobandi movement consider Rashid Ahmad Gangohi as a martyr because he died

due to a snake bite (in Islam, someone who dies of a snake bite is considered a martyr).

Munshi Qadir Bakhsh Sahib Bulandshahri had a dream eight days prior to Gangohi's martyrdom. He dreamt that an Ox-wagon was coming to Bulandshahar and Gangohi was sleeping inside it. A thin white cloth was covering his face. He followed the ox-wagon which was drove by a very handsome looking man. Upon asking the name of the Ox-wagon's driver, he replied "I am Ali."

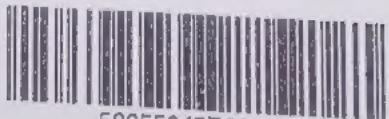
THE END

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On 10th of May, 1857, the would-be founders of Darul uloom Deoband, namely Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, led by their righteous teacher Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki rebelled against the British East India Company on the ground of Thana Bhawan, a small town in the Shamli district. The outcome of the rebellion was a decisive victory for the group of muslim ulemas. But later on, the rebellion came in favour of the British East India Company. From that point, an Islamic revivalist movement came into existence, popularly known as "the Deobandi movement".

The book is written by Muhammad Talha Amin, he is a passionate historian who is interested in presenting untold history.



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